Direct Line

Take a moment to consider these questions:

• What do we want Extension in Alabama to be?
• Where are we going?
• How will we get there?
• Where will the resources come from to help us reach our goals?
• How do we convince decision makers at all levels of government that providing resources to the System is a good investment and one that they must support?

The first critical step we must make is to change our mind-set from “surviving” to “thriving.” Obviously, we must survive to thrive, but simply remaining in existence is not enough. The citizens of Alabama deserve more and so does each one of you. We must strive to prosper and flourish. This must be our new mind-set.

I encourage you to review my “Direct Line” column in the January Extension Connections.

Programs, partnerships, volunteers and technology are key areas we must focus on in order to prosper and flourish.

We will soon establish new organizational directions or strategic visions that we as a System can rally around. It is vital that each one of us buy into these directions and visions personally. Then, we will be able to work together to communicate our identity and image to key decision makers.

Over the next few months, Stephen Bradley and Associates of Birmingham will be guiding us through the process of clarifying our strategic directions, updating and enhancing our image and communicating that image to our stakeholders as well as within the System. A representative group of ACES educators and leaders will meet Feb. 27-28 at the 4-H Center to start this process. Carol Whatley, co-leader of Extension Communications, is coordinating the activities.

This group will also help ensure that our overall directions within ACES are congruent with those of our two universities—Alabama A&M and Auburn. The group welcomes your input, so feel free to communicate with them via e-mail or phone.

This revamping of our mind-set as well as our strategic vision must serve to bolster our primary mission—the continued design and delivery of effective, viable and relevant Extension education programs. Our programs must meet local needs with statewide impact through the application of research-based information.

During the past six months, I have been pleased to see that progress is being made in our 4-H program delivery process. Moving to a volunteer-delivered, agent-led, community-based 4-H club program as identified in our 4-H Strategic Plan entitled “Any Kid, Any Time, Anywhere,” is very exciting. It is essential that Extension empower volunteers to deliver our 4-H club program so agents can work in the broader aspects of 4-H youth development programming.

We look forward to receiving the county plans that describe how the county staffs and their partners and collaborators are going to implement this program delivery process beginning in 2004.

These plans were due by the end of the year. However, because the fall is such a busy time for our youth programs, this deadline has been extended to Feb. 28. If youth agents have not done so already, please form your PATH advisory committees and together, prepare your plan and submit it to the state 4-H office by Feb. 28.

As you all know, the Alabama Legislature is in session at this time and is considering the Education Trust Fund budget for next year. Current speculation estimates an increase of 2.5 percent over this year’s prorated budget. But it would take an increase of more than 6 percent to take us back to the funding levels we had before proration was imposed.

We will do our best to keep you informed of how legislative action is impacting our funding.

On a more personal note, I want to offer my congratulations to the Alabama team that took first place in meats judging at the recent National Western Stock Show. A combined team of Tuscaloosa and Pickens County 4-Hers was coached by Johnny Gladney, Tuscaloosa County agent. Rebecca Wiggins, Pickens County, was the second high individual in the contest. Heather
Reach, Tuscaloosa County, was the third high individual and had a perfect score in meats ID. Tuscaloosa 4-H’ers Ellis Thorne and Michael Polke were fourth and tenth, respectively, in individual overall competition.

Bill Jones, Extension meat scientist, had an impact on the contest even though he didn’t attend. Jones taught both Gladney and the coach of the third place Kentucky team, former ACES specialist Benjy Mikel.

Jim Hairston, Extension water quality specialist, gave a talk recently at the AU Environmental Institute’s monthly seminar. He spoke on “Water Quality Issues and Web-based Water Quality Information.” Jim and others are hard at work developing a comprehensive water quality Web site that will go on-line in the near future.

Many of you may know that Rickey Hudson, Houston County agent, was badly injured while teaching his 4-H’ers how to trim their steers’ hooves. Richard Murphy, interim Houston County coordinator, tells me Rickey is doing better but faces a long recovery. If you would like to send Rickey a get well card, you can drop him a line at 1611 Galaxie Dr., Dothan, Ala. 36301.

As always, let me hear from you about both your dreams and concerns for our organization.

Program Highlight: Intensive Economic Development Course

How do we make our community more attractive to business? How do we encourage companies to locate in our town rather than someplace else?

Those are tough questions for city and county officials across Alabama, particularly for smaller communities, chambers of commerce and other groups whose budgets do not allow for large staffs devoted exclusively to economic development.

More than 17 years ago, the economic development community saw an immense need for better training of local officials in the intricacies of economic development. But who could provide such comprehensive training statewide that would be affordable to the smallest municipalities?

Short answer—the Community Resource Development program area of ACES.

Seventeen years ago, ACES initiated the Intensive Economic Development Course at the request of the economic development community as a way of boosting local economies across Alabama.

The two-week course trains economic developers from business, industry and government, who return to their local communities to implement the economic strategies they have learned.

The training introduces participants to all phases of industrial development, covering such topics as taxation, venture capital and bond financing. The goal is to teach the developers how to increase employment and strengthen their local economies.

“It is the most complete intensive professional economic development training program tailored specifically to Alabama’s economic development professionals,” said Warren McCord, Extension state program leader.

According to McCord, the course has trained more than 450 economic developers, many of whom are currently leaders in the economic development field throughout the Southeast.

“The program is strong because of the commitment of its sponsors and the 20 to 30 faculty members who are drawn from companies, governmental agencies and universities in Alabama,” McCord said.

Extension currently partners with the Auburn University Economic Development Institute to coordinate the course. The Economic Development Institute of Alabama is also a primary partner.

Annual sponsors include Alabama Power Company, BellSouth, Alabama Gas and Alabama Electric Cooperatives.

Selection Procedures for County Extension Coordinators to be Reviewed

The director has commissioned a task force to review the current procedures for selection of county Extension coordinators and to make recommendations for changes for the position of county Extension coordinators. The goal is to have the new selection procedures reconfirmed or revised and implemented by October 2002.

Carolyn Reedus, Extension head—personnel and staff development, will work with the group as the coordinator. Committee members consist of Rick Beauchamp, Elmore County Extension agent; Jannie Carter, Extension state program leader for urban affairs and new nontraditional programs; John Everest, Extension weed scientist; Clarene Teague-Johnson, district Extension coordinator; Carol Reid, Blount County Extension coordinator; Jim Todd, Mobile County Extension coordinator; and Eddie Wheeler, Marshall County Extension agent.
HR Facts

The ACES Human Resources office is now responsible for the initial review of professional service contracts (PSC). They will ensure that the service provider meets the IRS criteria for individual contractor status rather than employee/employer relationship. If it is determined that an employee/employer relationship exists, the recruitment process must be completed in order to pay the individual.

Several reminders about PSCs to consider:

1) The contract must be approved by all AU parties (including Accounts Payable) prior to the contractor signing it and prior to the work beginning. Doing otherwise can lead to significant problems.

2) Normally, outside independent contractors are hired only when the service is not available on campus.

3) IRS regulations regarding who qualifies as an independent contractor are quite rigid. In fact, the criteria is so rigid that few individuals meet the qualifications. As you make an initial determination on independent contractor status, please refer to the document at http://www.auburn.edu/administration/iss/business_office/pdf/IRS_15-a.pdf.

4) Because independent contractors are not employees of the university, neither they nor their work is covered by AU’s insurance. Therefore, some service providers must carry specific types and levels of insurance and must provide proof of that insurance to us. Please contact Risk Management (4-4533) for additional guidance on the types and levels of insurance needed.

5) PSCs on which payment for the entire scope of the project/work will exceed $10,000 must be approved by the appropriate vice president.

Length of Service Awards

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System is an organization of committed and caring individuals. At the recent ACES awards and recognition luncheon, a number of Extension professionals and staff were recognized for their years of service.

Length of Service Awards

35 Years

Dallas L. Hartzog

Wiregrass Regional Research Extension Center

30 Years

Lovie M. Avery

Marlane D. Avrett

Brenda C. Cobb

Mary W. Cobb

Inez Taylor

Clarence Teague-Johnson

Gracie Williams

20 Years

Mary J. Andrews

Edna T. Coleman

Lelia R. Downing

10 Years

Thomas Agee

Nellie R. Bennett

William C. Birdsong

Angela H. Carson

Donna L. Gullatte

Walter B. Harris

Donna M. Holman

Rita W. Meredith

Angie Moore

Jane P. Nettles

Rena N. Quick

Linda H. Robinson

Themika L. Sims

Myrus Weaver

Gay E. West

Civil Service Length of Service Awards

35 Years

Martha R. Johnson

Barbara W. Mobley

Administrative/Program Leadership

Family

Programs/Auburn
Arlie A. Powell  Administrative/Program Leadership
Reafield Vester  Houston County

30 Years
Tommy J. Brown  Blackbelt Regional Research and Extension Center
Brenda J. Jones  Chambers County
Claudia W. Meadows  Houston County
Ronald H. Smith  Entomology/Plant Pathology
James Ronald Weeks  Entomology/Plant Pathology

20 Years
Lisa C. Murphy  Marion County
John P. Ollison  Choctaw County
Russell C. Parrish  Butler County
Lewis L. Tapley  Jackson County
Shirley L. Whitten  Walker County

PERSONNEL

Appointments:

• Margaret Denise Smith, Human Resources Assistant, Jan. 14
• Christa Pickard, NEP Agent, Franklin County, Jan. 22
• Teresa Thomas, County Extension Office Clerk, Blount County, Jan. 22
• Linda Miller, NEP Agent, Autauga County, Jan. 23
• Susan Thompson, NEP Agent, Choctaw County, Jan. 23
• Synthia Williams, NEP Agent, Clay County, Jan. 23
• Gwen Snow, Cook II, 4-H Center, Jan. 28
• Valerie Moody, NEP Agent, Morgan County, Feb. 1

Proposals Submitted:

• Marilee Tankersley, 4-H Youth Development for Health Rocks, $5,000
• Marilee Tankersley, Corporate Foundation for Children for FACTS Training Enhancement Grant, $2,986
• Vickie Fussell, Corporate Foundation for Children for FACTS Training Enhancement Grant, $7,500
• Willie Williams, Butler County Board of Education for “I Can Achieve,” $19,142

ACES FAMILY HAPPENINGS

• Congratulations to J. Allyn Crane, Morgan County Agent, and his wife, Wendy. They are the proud parents of Sarah Anne. Sarah was born Dec. 27 and weighed 7 lb. 9 oz.
• Our sympathies to the family of Gloria Shelton, Dallas County Program Assistant. She passed away on Jan. 8. Gloria had worked as an EFNEP program assistant for 18 years.
• Our condolences to Montine Hardin, Multicounty Extension Agent/EFNEP, Etowah County. Her father, Rev. David Gafford, died Jan. 9 after an extended illness.
• Congratulations to Adria Ogiste, Multicounty EFNEP Agent in Lawrence County, and her husband, Harold. Their son, Noah Alexander, was born Jan. 9 and weighed 6 lbs. 6 oz.
• Our sympathies to the family of Sarah “Ann” Riddle, secretary in Cleburne County, who passed away Jan. 14 after a short battle with cancer. Ann had worked with Extension for almost 30 years.

• Our condolences to the family of Cullen Lamar Barefield. Barefield, who retired in 1978 as an Assistant County Extension Agent in Henry County, died Jan. 16. Barefield, who was a World War II veteran, began his career in Geneva County in 1954 before moving to Henry County the following year.

• Our sympathies to Charles R. Mason, Multicounty Extension Coordinator, Barbour/Russell Counties, in the death of his mother, Elizabeth Mason.

• Congratulations to Nancy Graves, Blount County Extension Agent, and husband Glen! Their daughter, Audra Elizabeth Graves, was born Jan. 21 and weighed 6 lbs. 4 oz.

• Our condolences to Sara E. Russell, Montgomery County 4-H DOT Program Assistant. Her mother, Mildred Russell, passed away Jan. 18.

• Our sympathies to Donna Reynolds, Extension Communications Editor, at the loss of her mother. Helen Reynolds died Jan. 25.

• Our sympathies to Margaret Wright, Etowah County Program Assistant. Her husband, Michael, passed away Jan. 28.

Gaines Smith, Interim Director